

is psychological rather than physiological in origin, in the sense that a man who is impotent is infecund, even though he may be able to produce viable gametes. There is, of course, no reason why psychological tendencies, or bodily characters influencing them, should not be inherited genetically just like anything else.

High fecundity is always of survival value, other things being equal, and differential child mortality must be very high indeed to offset its advantage in selection. The suggestion, however, is that when indiscriminate mortality from disease is high the relative disadvantage of low fecundity is greater, owing to the danger of the complete extinction of low fertility lines, than when mortality is lower and disease is at least partially under control. There had been very real advances in public health and medicine in England and Wales before 1911, especially amongst the better off sections of the population, and mortality from smallpox, cholera and plague, for instance, was negligible; these were the diseases that in previous centuries had struck indiscriminately at rich and poor alike. Since 1911 the contrast between the material conditions of life and medical treatment available to different classes has been much diminished, and the positive association between child mortality and large families will have decreased, though even today it is likely that the less fertile, who are generally better off, will take greater care of their fewer children and so have a significantly lower rate of child mortality.

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An Oral Method of Birth Control

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—Everyone will recognise the importance of a reliable oral method of birth control in the struggle against over population. That such a drug could be an equally potent weapon in furthering eugenic progress is not perhaps so obvious.

Let us suppose that drug X is an effective oral contraceptive and that drug Y is an equally effective antidote to drug X.

Let a government add drug X to the staple food of its people and let it sell drug Y, the antidote, at a price fixed at its discretion. By varying the price of drug Y, the size of the population could be controlled, and at the same time the genetic

quality would improve, for only the philo-progenitive and the reasonably successful would be able and willing to pay for drug Y. The irresponsible and the feckless would automatically be sterilized.

Naturally, I would not expect a democratic government to have the foresight or the courage to adopt such a scheme until famine was upon them, but it seems likely that famine may not be far off.

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A Register of Intelligence

To the Editor, Eugenics Review

SIR,—In a Welfare State we are so busy achieving perfect equality that we tend to overlook the need for high quality. Intelligence—which by nature and etymology denotes a selection—may suffer irreparable harm from this neglect of quality. Since our survival as an industrial nation depends on our ability to maintain or increase intelligence, the Ministry of Education should require headmasters of non-primary schools to list the highest fifth and lowest fifth of children leaving school during the year. This information could easily be confidential for research in vital statistics where no individual case would be published. Admittedly some children achieve their full intelligence only after leaving school and we must be content with an imperfect classifying of children. The inflexible one-fifth rule is better than any attempt at defining critical points on an imaginary scale for classifying children in the three groups of high, low and average intelligence.

Having obtained the two extreme lists for any year we need to incorporate them in two registers—one for high and the other for low intelligence. Marriages, childbirths, divorces and death would need to be registered along with the ages at which such events occur. In an earlier letter I have suggested a dot-coded register for the whole population from birth to death (or intervening immigration or emigration) and such a register could very conveniently be given a few extra columns—two would suffice—for recording persons who on leaving school were classified as being of very high or very low intelligence.

Otherwise we run the risk of becoming a nation of dockers on strike, coalminers with a 10 per cent absence rate and other so-called manual workers.

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